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Concept of Elites: Social and Political Elites overview

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Abstract: In this study a rigorous attempt has been made, to show the role of elites among the society in general and political elites in particular. For this study the researcher collected information via some primary and mostly secondary data for concretize the work. It's found that in every regime, each is being ruled by a small microscopic group of people. Whether in primitive or latest, democratic or dictatorial every society is ruled by elites. In the mean while the researcher found that different sections of society in various aspects have been occupied by the elites. There may be elites of intellectual, elites of farmers, elites of thieves, elites of lawyers, and elites of traders etc. As the key element of political elite is that in the society real power lies in the hands of capable people due to their possessive nature. The study reviews that in the democratic regime elites are chosen by the people, but in totalitarian /dictatorial atmosphere elites often imposed their will and power over the masses. Moreover, the paper consists about various theories of elite.

Keywords: Soft power, Circulation of elites, Possessive character.

Introduction:

The elites are the people who possess the capacity to rule and have a command over other actions in terms of power, wealth and they are charismatic in personality. Their possessive nature compelling rest for follow their commands and statements at any time and place. Apparently, it seems that every democratic regime is running with the consent of majority, but in actual same is running as per the willingness of elites which is not much favorable and beneficial for the majority. In the democratic regimes during the fixed tenure elected government often make attempts to gain and fulfill their social, political, economic vested interests all at the cost of exploiting the rights and interests of common masses. The masses do not exercise direct power; rather, they provide the mandate that allows a select group to make decisions on their behalf. Even the majority have no control over the minority after electing their respective leaders, thus one thing is getting clear here that every major decision in any democratic state are taken by the minority with their vested mindsets.

Elitism as a soft power

Furthermore, within autocracies or totalitarian systems, the power to govern is concentrated in a small, elite faction. These individuals typically command control through a combination of financial dominance and political influence, allowing them to maintain authority over the general population without their input. In such regimes people are surviving under the command of few elites. This or that way majority suffering under the hands of minority which are minor in population, but possessing large number of social prestige and wealth, as a result the people of world accepting the minority elites as their king or governor and people themselves liked to be governed under the minority elites. *The origins of the Elitist theory are in Plato's thoughts and writings but its elaboration is in the thought of two leading Italian sociologists, Gaetano Mosca and Vilfred Pareto are dedicated to analyzing how specific, small-scale organizations function when they possess the bulk of a society's executive authority. Essentially, it investigates the internal dynamics and*

social impact of groups where the ability to influence major outcomes is held by a limited few. (Bhushan, V. 183).

Proponents of Elite Theory highlight the inherent disparities within human society. Their core argument suggests that while a fundamental, natural equality might exist in a biological or philosophical sense, social and political structures do not reflect this. Instead, they contend that human systems inevitably create hierarchies, where individuals are viewed and treated as unequals based on their status and influence. Here the respective theorists conceding Elites as the superior section of any society who may possess some kind of capabilities to rule over rests and same are chosen by the people in every democratic regime. Therefore, it creates inequality among the people, due the heavy and influential power of few beings over a large portion of society. It can devastate the issues and willingness of majority; as a result, the whole society becomes a follower of small microscopic population. In every social structure, a privileged minority tends to emerge as the governing force. While the vast majority of the population may not be under direct or constant command, they are nonetheless subtly tethered to the decisions of this small group, finding themselves compelled to operate within the rules and frameworks established by those at the top.

In the early 1900s, the term "Elite" gained traction among social and political theorists to describe individuals who possessed exceptional qualities or rare talents that set them apart from the general public. Historically, these scholars argued that an elite status is earned by those who reach the pinnacle of their specific field, regardless of what that field might be.

Essentially, an elite group represents the "highest tier" of any given profession or social layer. This classification isn't limited to traditional power structures; it applies to any specialized area where a small group demonstrates superior skill or success. For instance, one can identify:

Commercial Elites: The most successful figures in the world of trade and finance.

Technical Elites: Master craftsmen or engineers at the top of their trade.

Legal Elites: The most influential and high-ranking members of the judiciary.

Even Criminal Elites: Those who show the highest level of "success" or organization within illegal circles.

Governing Elites: The small circle of individuals holding the highest political offices.

Theories of Political Elites

With the Passage of time the study of elite theory became important and relevant in order to understand the attributes of modern political system for the socio-political scientists. Scholars who specialize in Elite Theory focus their research on how authority, social influence, and the power to make critical decisions are allocated across a community. Their work centers on identifying who truly holds the reins of society and how that control is exercised.

Traditional literature on this subject posits that every civilization contains a singular, dominant core of leaders. This supreme group possesses the ultimate word on social policy and governance, operating independently of external oversight. According to this view, this top-tier faction remains the final authority, effectively shielding itself from the influence or constraints of any subordinate groups.

In this the theorists considers politicians, economists and civil servants. In nutshell these theorists asserting on Monistic view of elitism. And in such view, there are may be rule of single elite among or over the society.

In contrast to the traditional view, modern scholars advocate for a pluralistic model of Elite Theory. They argue that a single society is actually home to a variety of competing factions rather than one lone ruler. Within this framework, political leadership is not a given; instead, it is the result of a constant rivalry between different influential groups. Those who possess the greatest resources and strategic advantages eventually rise to the top through this competitive process.

Despite their differences, both classical and modern theorists agree on a fundamental premise: every society is governed by a minuscule minority. This tiny fraction of the population holds the exclusive power to formulate and execute major social decisions. Furthermore, both perspectives maintain that these individuals are not chosen at random. Instead, elites are defined by their exceptional proficiency, specialized skills, and refined talents.

Vilfred Pareto's theory of Elite

Vilfred Pareto, an Italian sociologist is the main proponent of Elite theory. He contributed to the 'theory of Elites and circulation of Elites' in his work "The mind and society". He was assuming that every individual in the world is different from other fellow in capabilities and competent. Human beings have large number of biological variations which resulted in inequalities among them because of their haves and have not, and the former will be influential over the later. Pareto also enunciating that some peoples have multi-talented or with different superior abilities while the rests possess some sought of lower qualities than the formers. Thus, according to Pareto, the former able and capable beings constitute Elites in the society.

The Elites are always forward in every walk of life and known for quality of God gifted head and heart. Moreover, Elite posses' guts to initiate execute and plan in social, economic and political dimensions of life. Extending his ideas over the concept he states that mostly society consists of two classes- Governing and Non-governing Elites. Pareto argued that human behavior is driven by deep-seated psychological motives he termed "residues."

He identified six core categories that shape how individuals—particularly leaders—act:

- 1) Innovation and Combination: This represents the intellectual flexibility and "cunning" often associated with the Fox. It is the ability to strategize and manipulate systems.
- 2) Institutional Persistence: This is the drive for stability and the willingness to use force or physical strength, embodied by the Lion.
- 3) External Manifestation: The urge to express internal emotions and beliefs through outward symbols or public rituals.
- 4) Social Attachment: The fundamental human need to form groups, affiliate with others, and maintain social bonds.
- 5) Personal Integrity: The desire to preserve one's own reputation and project a consistent, positive self-image.
- 6) Biological Impulses: The inherent sexual drive that influences human social dynamics.

After listing all these Pareto asserting that the first two residues must have in an Elite for retain his/her power among the society. According to Pareto "*History is a graveyard of aristocracies*" and gave the "*concept of Circulation of Elites*" which refer to a process of replacement of one Elite by another Elite. He also remarked that aristocracies formed and decayed with the circumstances. The new comers might replace the old one or the there is a constant change from conservatism to radicalism. He was saying that the cycle of rise and fall of elites occurred in history and may continue in future. But in order to retain the elite's power and to have stable society it's necessary for elites to combine the elements of fox and lion residue. Hence the governing Elite must have good balance with combination of both residues for social and economic stability to establish social equilibrium. *All Elites are prone to decay and downfall. Originally forceful and decisive elites become ineffective in course of time as a result of their easy living and addiction to power. A new elite group then arises and replaces the old one. (189).*

Gaetano Mosca's theory of Elite

Gaetano Mosca, another prominent Italian intellectual, significantly advanced the study of power dynamics in his seminal work, *The Ruling Class*. His central thesis posits that regardless of a society's level of development (from primitive tribes to the most sophisticated modern civilizations), (a compact minority invariably holds the reins of power).

Mosca argued that every human collective is divided into two distinct strata:

The Governing Layer: A small group that possesses the specific attributes necessary for leadership. This class manages all

administrative duties, executes political roles, and maintains a total monopoly over the community's decision-making authority. The Governed Majority: The larger segment of the population that is directed by the first group. This class is generally excluded from high-level decision-making and is expected to adhere to the structures and laws established by the elite.

Mosca here representing two political facts which may prevail in every society; first is that in every political institution there is one person who performs supreme position and some others also work under his supervision in order to furnish the planned objectives among the masses. The second is certain kind of pressures may arise from the masses that are being ruled or governed. Such exerting pressure may influence the strategies of ruling class. Mosca also further arguing that in every society the minority rule over the majority is kind successful, because it's easy for the former to organize their members as a reaction against majority. The minority have capabilities to unite and integrate because of its meager number. And on the other hand, majorities are more in number which became difficult to organize its members in order to counter the dictates of minority. Due to such kind of disintegration among the majority it's uneasy to organize itself due to large number of masses. Thus, the superior minority might be influential in the society where they live.

Gaetano Mosca also furthered the concept of 'Circulation of elite' like Pareto. He believed in the replacement of elite by another with the changing circumstances. He asserts that everything changes with the passage of time, so people's tastes, ideas also subjected to change due to the growing advancement in the life of common man. When the balance of existing political force loses their importance and capacities which may result in the allocation of services to the people, then the common man exerts pressures on the certain elites to change. With the waves of time everything may change like the new religion will counter the old one, emergence of new industries will defect on the old one. Similarly, the composition of the governing group is never static; it is subject to a continuous process of internal renewal. This shift typically occurs as the ruling circle integrates fresh individuals emerging from the general public or lower social ranks. Eventually, this progression leads to a more significant transition: the existing leadership is displaced by a rising "counter-elite." This new faction eventually overtakes the established power structure, ensuring that the governing body evolves over time.

Robert Michael's theory of Elite

Robert Michels, an Italian sociologist and a follower of Mosca's school of thought, expanded upon the theory of elites in his

influential publication, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Michels conducted an in-depth analysis of European labor movements and trade unions, with a specific focus on the German Socialist Party.

Despite these organizations being founded on democratic ideals, Michels discovered that they inevitably developed into oligarchies. He observed that as these groups grow, they become increasingly centralized, placing decision-making power in the hands of a few professional leaders. He concluded that while organizations are essential for gathering and expressing the collective will of the people, they simultaneously create a structure where a dominant inner circle eventually takes control.

But according to Michael organizational workings are furnished by Executive committee and denied peoples' participation in the decision making process. Thus, organizations produce oligarchy. And this is anti-democratic. In considering so Michael proposed "Iron law of oligarchy". He observed each organizational working with depth and stating that democracy is inconceivable without organizations and organizations are able to grant power to people but simultaneously organizations raising the creation of Elites. Michael thus, asserting that rule of oligarchy is in the same sense applicable to all organizations including the organization of state. He argues that democracy allowing competition between several oligarchic structures.

Political Elites establish their publicity among the people in order to strengthen the decision making mechanism. It is found that with the changing circumstances elitist movements and alterations has been occurring. The idea of elite seems equality in the democratic regimes, as the leaders are elected by the people, but in actual there is inequality with in the concept of election system in the democracies, because the minority will rule over majority. Same is the case in dictatorial regimes again minority will rule over the majority. Elites often grow, compete for power and ultimately may replace by another. Thus, the study revealed that how the circulation of elites happened in both democratic and dictatorial regimes.

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